

Arrests in Chicago in alleged fake ID ring

by UPI

CHICAGO - U.S. prosecutors charged 22 people in Chicago with allegedly selling fake identity papers to thousands of illegal aliens.

An indictment unsealed Wednesday said the Chicago branch of a Mexican crime family had sold thousands of fake identification papers annually since 2003, netting \$2 million to \$3 million per year, USA Today reported.

As many as 20 illegal immigrants at a time were sold phony driver's licenses, green cards and Social Security numbers in a Chicago mall parking lot for \$200 to \$300 a set, court papers said, USA Today reported.

Critics accused federal officials of timing the action to discourage people from participating in an immigration-reform rally next week.

"I can assure everyone that the arrests had nothing to do with the rally that's upcoming," U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. "There is a great debate going on in our country about the immigration situation. This case is not about that debate."

Agents arrested 12 people named in the indictment on Tuesday and were looking for 10 others, four of whom were believed to be in Mexico.

The indictment also accused them of smuggling people into the United States, USA Today reported.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.